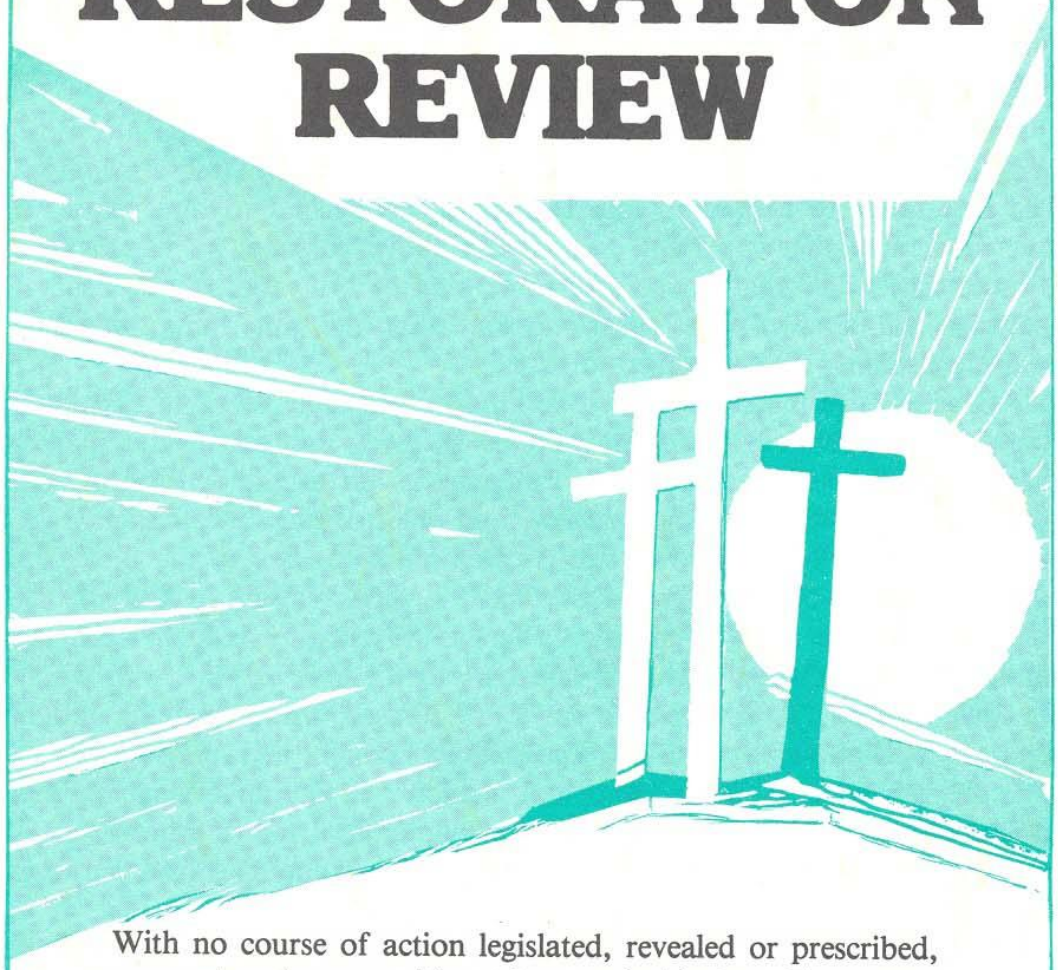
RESTORATION REVIEW



With no course of action legislated, revealed or prescribed, we cannot make one without human legislation. The course of some preachers in demanding separations and the breaking up of family relations, and the refusal to even baptize certain ones, whose marriage status does not measure up to his standard of approval, is a presumptuous procedure. It reveals the tendency to displace God as the judge of us all, and a preacher ascends to the bench. —*Foy Wallace, Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State,* p. 41)

See *Is A "Law of Divorce" Part of the Gospel?*, p. 169

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Volume 25, No. 9 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **November 1983**

The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View . . .

THE NATURE OF MAN

May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 1 Thess. 5:23

In a philosophical discussion of man there are two terms that are sometimes used that may strike you as funny words, *dichotomy* and *trichotomy.* The first refers to a division into two parts, the second to three parts. If one views man the way Paul does in the above passage, he would be a trichotomist, which may sound like some kind of a heretic. If one believes that man has but two parts, spirit and soul being the same thing, he would be a dichotomist, which sounds no better.

Soul and spirit may appear to be indistinguishable, even in Scripture, for Heb. 4:12 refers to the word of God as living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and as "piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." While this is often made to refer to the Bible, the context suggests that "the word of God" is God himself or Christ. The following passage goes on to say "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." It is therefore the Lord himself whose piercing insight separates soul and spirit and who knows every thought and motive.

The reference to "both joints and marrow" is figurative language that indicates that the Word penetrates the very innards of man's inmost self --- it or he gets inside the genes of soul and spirit. All thoughts and purposes are fully analyzed and perfectly classified by the infallible Judge. It is something like saying "In him we live and move and have our very being" (Acts 17:28), however man's nature might be described.

It is not certain that Paul or any of the New Testament is trichotomist, or dichotomist either, for in such passages as we have quoted the writers may be simply accommodating themselves to a view of man that had been common since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers, as far back as 500 B.C. The Greeks saw man as a trinity: he has a material body, which they called *soma;* he has an animal soul, *pseuche;* he has an immortal spirit, *pneuma.* The latter is the seat of the higher intellectual and moral faculties, while *pseuche* (soul) is the seat of animal life, which includes passions, instincts, and appetites. The *soma* (body) is simply the material house for the other two. These are the same Greek words used in Heb. 4:12 and I Thess. 5:23.

To the Greeks, therefore, it is *pneuma* that separates human kind from all other creatures. Animals, even plants and insects, have body and soul. As a *thinking* creature man is unique. But to the Greeks this trinitarian view of man was not necessarily religious --- the spirit did not necessarily come from God. Aristotle, for instance, saw all this as eternal and uncreated. What is has always been, and is always changing.

The old Greek version of man as body, soul, and spirit may, of course, be right. God may have bequeathed to their sages such wisdom, and it is understandable that biblical writers would refer to human nature in such terms, whether precisely correct or not. What 1 Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12 really teach is that God blesses, knows, and indwells "the whole man," describe him as you will.

I am persuaded that there is no way to dichotomize or trichotomize human nature. We are not so easily compartmentalized, for what is soul is also spirit, and what is body may be spiritual as well as physical. Usually the Bible makes soul and spirit the same, and even the body is not sheer matter, for it is referred to as "the temple of the Holy Spirit" and has a destiny beyond the grave, "the mortal putting on immortality." Even in this life the body can be viewed as an extension of the human spirit. Just as we can properly say "I do not *have* a spirit, I *am* spirit," we can also say "I do not *have* a body, I *am* body or *somos.* Your body is also you, not simply your housing. The interaction of soul (spirit) and body makes this evident. Bodily hurts often mean spiritual hurts and bodily joys mean spiritual joys, and conversely. Many noble souls, decimated by severe maladies, are continually buoyed up by an animate spirit.

The truth that is vital to us is not how our nature is to be analyzed, but that we have a Creator who is not far from any of us and who knows every nook and cranny of our inmost being, however complex it may be.

lt is also a crucial truth that we stand apart from all other creatures, being made in the image of God. We only need to study our free fingers and prehensile thumb, along with the rotation capacity of the arm, to see that we are different from the animals. Then there is our erect posture, a larger brain, a more highly organized and intricate nervous system. It is a very important fact about you that your brain is about three times larger than the largest anthropoid ape, and that the greatest development within the skull is the cerebrum, the seat of the higher mental powers.

But you are also unique among the creatures in that you have the capacity to communicate in propositional language, both spoken and written. You can repeatedly invent, make tools, build machines. You cannot only travel through the air but into outer space. You are also a social and political creature who forms cultures, nations, laws,

institutions. You are conscious of yourself and of history, and you have aesthetic appreciation. You are an ethical creature, capable of religious refinement.

Henry Giles was referring to the likes of you when he wrote:

"Man is greater than a world --- than systems of worlds; there is more mystery in the union of soul with the body, than in the creation of a universe."

It is also a vital truth that we are of divine origin, regardless of what science has to say about it. Whatever merits the theory of evolution may have, we must keep in mind that it does not explain either the origin of life, the nature of life, or the will to live. It is only fair to the theory of evolution to recognize that it does *not* teach that man descended from the ape. Even if man and the ape have a common ancestry, which the theory does hold, that does not preclude a divine origin for man in the dim, distant past.

In a day when secularism accounts for human nature only in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry, we as believers must hold forth the biblical view of man. It is true, as modern science teaches, that we are part of the physical order of nature, and, like other objects, are subject to its laws. It is also true that scientific disciplines, whether sociology, political science, anthropology, or psychology, have much to teach us about ourselves. A secularistic view of man is all right insofar as it goes, but it does not go far enough in that it does not consider "the complete person." It dares to reduce the rich qualities of human personality to the functions of the biological organism. It neglects what is distinctively human about us.

Along with God's revelation that tells us who we are, we have the crucial witness of our own self-consciousness. These two testimonies, the Bible and our intuition, sometimes unite in bearing witness to our divine origin, as in Ps. 8:

"When I look at the sky, which you have made, at the moon and the stars, which you set in their places, what is man, that you think of him; mere man, that you care for him? Yet you made him inferior only to your-self; you crowned him with glory and honor. You appointed him ruler over everything you made; you placed him over all creation."

Here we have a poet of God contemplating his own nature as a man. This capacity within itself sets man apart. With the wonders of nature before him (general revelation) and the word of God in his mind (special revelation), he ponders his own consciousness of self with *What* is *man?* (subjective revelation), and concludes that God is the author of it all, a faith based on both reason and revelation.

We are alone in this universe only if we choose to be. Anyone can believe who is willing to take an authentic look up and out and in. --- *the Editor*

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THE BASIS OF ACCEPTANCE

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. --- Rom. 15:7

Perhaps I have already said it now and again, or at least implied it, but in this essay I want to say it as unequivocally as possible: *we have no right to make anything a condition of accepting a fellow believer except loyalty to Christ.* There can be no baptismal test, no doctrinal test, no ecclesiastical test, no educational test, no racial test, no social test. Nothing, except loyalty to Jesus Christ. And this loyalty is to be determined by the persons's own relationship to Christ, his own abilities and knowledge, his own limitations and opportunities. Not ours.

This Scripture, which is a command by metaphor, should be all the motivation we need: *as* Christ received us we are to receive one another. In receiving us Jesus went the second mile and then some, for it was by mercy that he saved us. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). If the Lord received us with all our warts and hangups, we are to receive each other with all our imperfections.

By "receive" or "accept" I take St. Paul to mean *to treat and acknowledge as an equal in Christ.* We are to receive a brother because he is a brother and a sister because she is a sister, not because he or she belongs to the right party or has passed some check-list. The condition can be but one thing: *belief in and obedience to Jesus Christ according to one's light.*

Several ideas get in our way when we consider this more open position. One is fellowship, which we tend to equate with approval or endorsement, and so we say things like "We can't fellowship a brother in error." If that means we can't *endorse* what we believe to be wrong, that is right, but we *can* accept (treat as an equal) one who holds erroneous positions. If not, there would be almost no one to fellowship since we all "fall short of the glory of God." In the light of Scripture, fellowship simply means *sharing the common life*, and there can be and is sharp diversity between those who share "life in the Son," in the earliest church as well as the modern church. There can be even serious clashes without a break of fellowship, as with Peter and Paul. Paul withstood Peter to his face on one occasion, for "he was to be blamed," and the apostle refers to others who "were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:11-14). But there is no hint that this confrontation compromised the reality of the life they shared in Christ, or their fellowship.

We might try using acceptance more and fellowship less. Rom. 15:7 does not mention fellowshiping one another but *receiving* one another, and it tells how: the way Christ received you, the way of mercy, love, tenderness.

Membership is another hangup, and this idea does not have deep roots in Scripture, except in terms of our being "members one of another," which has little or nothing to do with what we call *church membership.* We think of receiving someone into church membership, or that his or her name is listed in the directory, and he or she is thus publicly accepted as a member of our congregation. This may have its virtue, but we must distinguish between this and the principle of accepting all other believers in Christ as equals. Church rolls and membership lists are our ideas and are not mandated in Scripture.

The idea we often have of *Christian* is still another roadblock to a more open view. As honorific as the name is, it is barely in the Bible, and in one important sense is not there at all: in the sense of any believer ever calling himself by that name or ever calling any other believer by that name. It is next to certain that it was an appellation bestowed by outsiders, maybe in derision and maybe not. The church's earliest historian takes note of when and where "the disciples" were first called Christians (Acts 11 :26) and proceeds to call them believers and disciples, never Christians. Even when Agrippa told Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28), the apostle avoids applying the term to himself in response, while another apostle acknowledges that believers should rejoice if they are called upon to "suffer as a Christian" (1 Pet. 4: 16).

I am not of course complaining about the name, though I agree with Alexander Campbell that it may be presumptuous for us to call ourselves such, but to the finality and precision that we inject into the name. I have noticed, for example, that my people will accept others as disciples of Christ when they will not accept them as Christians. We usually draw a finer line on who is a Christian than on who is a disciple. Jesus has only asked that we make disciples of all the nations, not Christians. And I am saying in this essay that we should accept all disciples of Jesus *as equals,* on the same grounds that Jesus received us.

In the light of Scripture I know little or nothing of "how to become a Christian," but the Bible makes it abundantly clear how to become a disciple of Christ: believe in him and follow him. We should accept as fellow disciples all who do that. Loyalty to Christ is the standard!

Our doctrines on baptism are the most serious obstacles to this larger view, and I say doctrines because we have no single interpretation. Some insist that baptism must be for the remission of sins, with the disciple having to understand that to be the purpose when baptized, to be valid. Some stress its essentiality, and the candidate must believe it to be absolutely necessary when he is baptized. Others take a more symbolic view of baptism. But we hardly have one position, except that we generally are reluctant to receive other disciples of Christ as equals unless they have been immersed as have we.

In doing this we commit an old fallacy called *non sequitur.* While we should stand firm to what we believe the Scriptures to teach about baptism, it does not follow that in doing that we have to reject those who do not yet have our understanding. We can bear witness to the truth about baptism in the context of accepting all other believers on the basis of their fidelity to Jesus Christ, according to their understanding. If we make our understanding and practice of baptism a test of acceptance, we then and there alienate ourselves from most of the Christian world and thus neutralize any influence we might have.

I will illustrate what I mean. Now and again I am with a gathering of believers in a common cause, such as a fight against pornography. Since they talk, believe and act like Christians, I do not bother to question them about their baptism. I accept them as equals in Christ (period) and with no strings attached. Since we share the common faith (fellowship), I may and do have opportunity to teach them just as they teach me. While baptism (my understanding and practice) is not a condition for my accepting them, it is a subject we might well discuss *within a framework of loving acceptance*. It would be the same if they came to our church.

Our church here in Denton does it the right way, as I see it. I'll put it as one of the elders recently stated it to me: we accept people on the profession of their faith in Christ, which is implied by their presence and interest. We bear testimony to all that we believe to be right and good, including baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. As people come to share this view they will make the proper response. Until they do we go right on accepting them, making no distinctions. While we have a "directory," we do not make much of it, and it is only for convenience and not a "membership" roll. We somehow know who our "members" are without having a hard and fast rule as to who they are. We immerse people into Christ as they come to see that they should obey this command. While we recognize baptism as a transition point, "the answer of a good conscience toward God" as the Bible puts it, we do not have to await a person's response to our way of baptizing before we accept them as fellow disciples, or "Christians" if you like.

In reference to baptism as a condition to fellowship, history has bequeathed to us a problem the earliest believers did not have, for in the primitive faith there was no such thing as an unbaptized (unimmersed) disciple of Christ. In fact they were made disciples by being immersed into (not *in)* the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (which means to be initiated *into* a relationship), according to Matt. 28:19. When a disciple met another disciple he would know that he had been baptized.

While it is admittedly not quite that way today due to centuries of disputing about baptism, it seems appropriate that we make the same presumption when we meet another Christian --- assume that he is a baptized believer (most are baptized in some manner) and accept him and treat him as such. If as we share life in Christ it becomes evident that he has not been properly baptized, it is something we can place before him at the proper time. But in learning that he is unbaptized or improperly baptized we should not then and there "un-disciple" him and reject him. We will receive him as a believer and as a disciple, even if an improperly baptized one, for that is what Jesus did with us --- he received us even when we didn't have everything exactly right.

We are not of course talking about folk who *reject* baptism as an ordinance of God, for that is not loyalty to Christ, but folk who do not see baptism the way we do. I am persuaded that there is no way for us to take ourselves seriously as a unity movement (do we take it seriously?) if we separate ourselves from other believers over baptism.

What we should emphasize in baptism is not its externals as much as its implication --- the likeness of Christ. In baptism we rise to walk in a new life. Christlikeness is the real bond that attracts us to each other. Should you chance to meet a Greek Orthodox who beautifully exemplifies the likeness of Christ, it should be *that* - Christlikeness - that draws you to him, and him to you. You accept him and come to love him because you see in him the one you both love. As you "share the life" together it should not bother you too much to learn that he did you one better on immersion (or *two* better!) in that he was *triune* baptized. After all, doesn't it say to baptize into the name of (1) the Father, (2) the Son, (3) and the Holy Spirit!

Should your Greek friend come to your church would you insist that he be baptized again, just once this time, before you would accept him?

It can get complicated and risky if we make anything a test except the one laid down by Jesus, "Come, follow me." I will walk with all those that heed that call, and will seek to help them to follow him more nearly, know him more clearly, and love him more dearly. --- *the Editor*

I was once so straight that, like the Indian's tree, I leaned a little the other way. I was so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with anyone who was not as perfect as I supposed myself to be. In this most unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake and saw that on the principle embraced in my conduct, there never could be a congregation or church upon the earth. --- *Alexander Campbell (Christian Baptist, 1826)*

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IS A "LAW OF DIVORCE" PART OF THE GOSPEL?

ASSISTANCE NEEDED IN CENTRAL NEW HAMPSHIRE. We are a small conservative congregation in Laconia, New Hampshire. A city of 30,000 souls surrounded by many towns and hamlet, where there are no churches of Christ. There is desperate need for preachers, teachers and a building to begin to evangelize this area. Divorce problems are rampant here as they are elsewhere, and we believe the Lord still means what He said in Matt. 19:9. We have already found this eliminates support from an unbelievably large segment of the brotherhood. Surely there must be congregations looking for a place to help bring the gospel to a long neglected area, and who still believe what almost all of us did a few years back. We want to teach these people what they need to hear --- not necessarily what they would like to hear. Won't you help us? Souls are waiting. Robert Monts, (603) 934-3103 or Richard Heller (603) 279-5562. Church of Christ, P. O. Box 1116, Laconia, New Hampshire 03247.

An ad appeared in a recent issue of the *Firm Foundation* that distressed me. I would like to say something in this editorial that would cause those who ran the ad to reconsider. I urge them to realize that by the bowels of Christ they might be wrong, as I concede that I might be wrong. I can only ask that they, and you too, kind reader, think along with me. I am persuaded that the integrity of the gospel is at stake.

Our printer will place the ad in question on this page just as it appeared in the *Firm Foundation.* One gets the immediate impression that our brethren in New Hampshire have a mind to work, and they have a passion for souls. This we commend warmly, and of course we do not question their sincerity.

It happens, however, that there is packed into this one little ad some of our most damaging concepts, and I am persuaded that if these fallacies could be recognized and corrected it would do more for their mission in New Hampshire than all the money they might hope to receive.

Before I discuss the subject that concerns me most, I will briefly refer to those that concern me less, though still very important. There are three of these.

1. Are we not unauthentic as the Body of Christ if we have "conservative" and "liberal" churches? Why not be simply a church of Jesus Christ in Laconia, N. H. or anywhere else, open to all disciples of Christ, whether "liberal" or "conservative" or whatever, if brethren choose to wear such labels? If a church labels itself as "conservative" or "charismatic" or "premillennial" does it not imply that a doctrinal test is imposed in one way or another? Why can't we simply be Christians, Christians *only,* with no attending labels, and thus leave people free in Christ?

2. To be a true church of Christ do we have to be the *only* church of Christ around? Notice the magnitude of our claim: "a city of 30,000 souls surrounded by many towns and hamlets where there are no churches of Christ." No other congregations of Christ in all that area except our one struggling church? Of all the independent churches, the Bible churches, the Christian churches, not to mention scores of other denominations, our one little congregation is the only church of Christ, and note the lower case c, always an important part of the scenario. It follows of course that our folk are the only Christians around. We don't have to be sectarian and exclusive. The Scriptures do not require it and it is contrary to our heritage. It is all right for us to believe that we are right and that we are Christians, but it does not follow that we have to believe that everyone else is wrong and that there are no other Christians.

3. Is it not odd, to say the least, that a people grounded in Scripture and devoted to saving souls would ever refer to "a building to begin to evangelize this area"? Are we indeed *the* people who follow the New Testament to the very letter? We build a building so that we can begin to evangelize? Does this mean that we are to put up a building, then urge sinners to our edifice so that we can preach to them? These days missiologists are saying just the opposite: buildings are often an obstacle in that they tie you to a given area. We must return to "the church in thy house" of New Testament times, they tell us. Do buildings make Christians or do Christians make buildings, assuming they are needed?

While these are significant concerns, there is yet a critical concern, and this has to do with the nature of the gospel of Christ itself. Read the ad carefully and see if it does not imply that a particular interpretation of Mt. 19:9, or a certain doctrine about divorce, is a necessary part of the gospel that they want preached in New Hampshire.

The argument is as clear as it is concise:

1. Divorce is a problem in their area as everywhere else, and they believe Jesus means what he says in Mt. 19:9.

2. Their stand on this passage (or divorce) drastically reduces the number of churches that might otherwise support them.

3. But *surely* there are some churches --- and notice the wording --- that will "help bring the gospel to a long neglected area."

4. They go on to say that they want to teach these people (the sinners in their area) what they need to hear, which includes their teaching on divorce, based on Mt. 19:9.

Does this not make the gospel doctrinaire? To preach the gospel does one have to layout certain laws, whether God-made or man-made, about divorce and remarriage?

Does this not make an opinion (an interpretation) part of the gospel? The ad concedes that even most Churches of Christ do not see Mt. 19:9 the way they do in New Hampshire. Issues relative to divorce and remarriage are much disputed, with sincere Christians holding different views, and yet some of our people seek to impose their position not only upon the church but the entire world, making it part of the gospel itself.

Our New Hampshire brethren insist that Jesus meant what he said in Mt. 19:9. And what is it that he said? "Whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery."

If we limit ourselves to this one passage as the ad does, it is clear that Jesus is teaching that:

1. Divorce is wrong and is contrary to what God intended for marriage.

2. Someone is guilty of this wrong, the one who divorces his or her, spouse.

3. Fornication is an exception; one is not guilty of the sin of divorce if his or her spouse has committed fornication.

Is this not all that can be concluded from Mt. 19:9? Is this not all that Jesus actually said?

With Mt. 19:9 in hand may we therefore conclude that:

1. The first marriage remains in effect when one divorces his spouse and marries again?

2. The second marriage is not really a marriage? Those in such a union are “living in adultery”?

3. The guilty party can never marry again, celibacy being the only alternative for such a sin?

4. When one repents of the sin of divorce, he or she must divorce the second spouse (which in God’s sight wasn’t a marriage anyway) and return to the first spouse (if possible) or remain a celibate the rest of his or her life?

It is evident that these four conclusions, advocated by a substantial number of our “conservative” brethren, are sheer presumption. We agree that Jesus meant what he said, but he said none of these things, and yet these well-intentioned brethren have no qualms about imposing them upon the world and the church alike as gospel. And to do this they seem quite willing to be a party to still more divorces and broken homes --- all in the name of repentance.

The truth is that this “divorce law” is preacher-made, not God-made, and many Church of Christ preachers are particularly guilty. And they add insult to injury when they presume to make their presumptions part of the gospel.

Since we are a people devoted to Scripture, we should allow the Bible to speak to us on this matter. Our New Hampshire brethren, with many others like them, would “preach” a divorce law, imposing the conclusions listed above upon those who would become Christians, calling upon the divorced to separate from their spouses, some of whom have both children and grandchildren. But is this what we find in Scripture?

There were 3,000 responses at Pentecost in Acts 2. Divorce being what it was among the children of Abraham, we can be sure that many were divorced and remarried. But what did Peter and the other apostles do --- except to preach the gospel and immerse those who accepted it! Where in all of the Bible does an apostle call for a “family adjustment” before one can become a Christian. Always the gospel takes people where they are. Jesus as “the way” means that any person can take that way from where he stands at the moment. They treated no sinner as irretrievable, no sin as unpardonable, no situation as irremedial.

Certainly they preached repentance, and this calls for restitution when possible, but repentance was always in reference to the realities of the person’s life.

The person who divorces and “marries another” is married. Jesus names it a marriage, even when the person did wrong in contracting it. Repentance can only mean, therefore, that he regrets what he did, asks God for forgiveness, and resolves to divorce no more and to make his second (or third) marriage a thing of beauty for God. To impose upon him a

"law of separation" from his second (or fourth) wife is to impose what God has never enjoined.

We are to preach the gospel to him, the love story of God as demonstrated in Christ Jesus, and baptize him upon a profession of faith. It is just that simple. We are to be ministers of the gospel, not lawyers.

Lest our good brethren in New Hampshire consider me a "liberal" and write me off as dangerous, I will close with a quotation from the late, highly-respected R. L. Whiteside, who resided right here in Denton, Texas (his daughter Inis still lives in the old home place only a few minutes from where I now sit) and was as "conservative" as they come. This paragraph from his pen should be heeded by all our people from Texas to New Hampshire.

"It seems to me that we say a lot more about this matter of divorce and marrying again than did the apostles. Read their letters, and also study their preaching, and see how little they said about the matter; and yet the marriage vows were then treated more lightly, if possible, than they are now. What is the explanation? Were they more lenient toward the ignorant and erring than you and I are? Did they baptize those who demanded baptism without looking into what they had formerly done? Would they have said what I have said about divorce and marriage among aliens? The apostles were the ambassadors of Christ - the last interpreters of His will. Perhaps we should study from this angle more than we have yet done so." (*Reflections*, p. 412)

Few paragraphs emanating from this little Texas city have been as reasonable as that one. --- *the Editor*

We are urging that the church not withdraw itself from a brother who commits fornication and is put away from his wife for that cause, but he later repents of his sin and is restored to the fellowship of the church, then later marries again just as the former wife has done. Why should the church fellowship her but withdraw from him?

--- *Gus Nichols, Words of Truth, 1966. p. 3*

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RENEWAL THROUGH RECOVERY (6)

W. Carl Ketcherside

The word “purpose” is from *pro*, before; and *ponero*, to place. It refers to that which one places before himself as a goal to be reached, or an aim to be accomplished. It represents his plan, his design, his intention for life. Without it he may spend years of erratic wandering, attempting everything and accomplishing little, if anything. There is an old saying that “He who follows two hares is sure to catch neither.” There is another proverb from other days, which goes, “The master of one trade will support a wife and seven children; the master of seven will not support himself.” One of the most heartbroken, disappointed kings the world has known was Joseph II of Austria. Chiseled on his tomb are the words: “Here lies a monarch who, with the best of intentions, never carried out a single plan.”

We decry the lack of artistry exhibited in many products today. One reason is that they are machine-made. But a machine has no mind. It cannot reason. It has no pride. It cannot stand back and admire what it has done. In olden times individuals inherited from father and grandfather the skills they employed. From earliest childhood they had worked at the shoemaker’s last, the pottery wheel, or the blacksmith’s forge. Their sweat, and sometimes their blood, went into the product. It was meticulously shaped and crafted, because not only the item, but the family was judged by it.

And that is one thing wrong with the community of the saved ones in our day. They have turned things over to the machine to run. They have little, if any personal interest in what happens. They are spectators, on-lookers, bystanders. More and more the manipulators turn the meetings into spectacles, going all out to present a highly organized, cleverly arranged performance with the preacher as ring-master, the conductor, the impresario. The Establishment takes care of everything. It hires, fires and regulates. All the members are expected to do is to show up for the exhibition, contribute as directed, and not rock the boat, or make waves by criticism.

Time was when honest tears flowed freely down furrowed cheeks when one was immersed into Jesus. Sometimes the entire audience was shaking with sobs of unrestrained joy. But no more. One does not weep when a new cog is fitted into a wheel, or a stray bolt is used as a replacement. It is not manly to cry in our culture. It is not womanly either. Paul, who warned the Ephesians three years, day and night with tears, would be dismissed today as a “sentimental old kook.” What is our problem? We have forfeited our purpose. We are letting empty buckets down into empty wells.

If we would seek renewal, and we had better seek it, if we expect to survive, we must recover what we have lost — our purpose, the apostolic purpose. Voltaire called the Frenchman La Harpe “an oven which was always heating, but never cooked anything.” We run frantically here and there, looking for this program or that, borrowing schemes,

stealing ideas, appropriating methods, but never fitting them into a definite purpose. We must develop a strategy for the faith which is adapted to succeed. We are not playing around. God has not called us to a picnic.

What should our purpose be? Whatever it is, it must become an obsession, an overwhelming, breath-taking, life-shaking, way of life dedicated to the pursuit of the Holy Grail, the search for the Golden Fleece, the hunt for the river of golden sands. Every other thing must somehow be fitted into it, every other feature must be related to it. The apostolic purpose was the divine one. It was the God-purpose. The Father made everything one in the cosmic creation. But Satan fragmented and splintered it, like a madman hurling a rock through a lovely mirror. God is not to be deterred from his place. Everything must again become a unit. He must be all in all.

In one paragraph in the “letter of the mystery” Paul defines his purpose in an outpouring of words which remind one of a dam bursting and releasing the pent-up waters. Listen! “For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to the purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” Have you ever heard a more all-embracing statement? Consider the words will, purpose and plan, and ponder their implications for the called-out of God. What is his will? What is his purpose? What is his plan? Will has to do with determination, purpose has to do with declaration, plan has to do with design. All three of them are directed toward the unity of all things.

This is not a human dream. It is not a fantasy. It did not come by rationalization but by revelation. He made it known. It originated in heaven and not on earth. It came from God and not from man. And it was made known in all wisdom and insight. It was not to be a noble experiment or a test tube case. It is not the result of a trial in a great laboratory. He is the only-wise God and his wisdom is behind it. He is insightful and all of his pragmatism is poured into it. That which was a mystery, unheard of, undreamed of yesterday, is a reality today. The mystery is made known.

That mystery made known has to do with his purpose. It is set forth in Christ. Until Jesus came and died the mystery was hidden and concealed. It could not be declared. Now it is seen to be a plan for the fulness of time. Time is not eternity which never fills. It is a measure of life on earth. And when time reaches a certain point all things will be united.

How this will be brought about we do not know. What we do know is our part in it, and that part constitutes our purpose, as it did the purpose of the apostles. In the midst of a world set at odds by Satan we have lost that purpose. We no longer think of the “one body concept” except in conjunction with our specific sects.

No sect is the one body, and the one body is not a sect. The body is not a conglomerate of sects and all of the sects together do not constitute the body. The body is composed of individuals, working together, sharing in unison, functioning as a unit. And the achieving of that unanimity of purpose must be our purpose. If we can see each other as fraternal helpers through the eyes of love, rather than as rivals through the eyes of envy, we will set the stage for the unfolding of the drama of the ages. No one who truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God is an enemy of any other person who truly believes that. No such one is an enemy of God.

In the past we have been unable to sort our foes from our friends. The reason is because of our early training, environment and discipline. We have been taught to think sectarian. And one who thinks sectarian will be sectarian. Our exclusiveness, forced upon us, kept us from association with others on the spiritual level, and we have never been able to properly evaluate them upon that level. Because of our rural and small town heritage we were thrown together in school, in our home life, and in business. We came to appreciate the honesty, the sincerity, the uprightness of others. But they were members of "another church" and we did not associate with them on the level of the Spirit. We were aloof, isolated, and even sometimes downright rude. All of us recall relatives who put us to shame when it came to good works, but they were Baptists, Methodists, or members of the Assembly of God. We cooly ignored them.

It will create a trauma for some of us to move toward the one body, composed of every saved person on earth. Fear will grip us. We will stand in dread of God's avenging wrath. That is because of the thorough "brain-washing" to which we have been subjected by Satan. He is afraid we will make it work. And I think we have him nervous now because of talking about it. Nothing else is quite as dangerous to the kingdom of darkness as the unity of the children of light. Satan will employ preachers to act as a "fifth column." They will use the age-old weapons of threat, boycott, pressure, and excommunication. But God's purpose, will, plan and pleasure will and must be accomplished. The eternal years of God are with us. Let us move out. Let us go forward!

Of all the ways of defining man, the worst is the one which makes him out to be a rational animal.

— *Anatole France*

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HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS

Cecil Hook

Because Paul assures us that the Spirit of God is in us and "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God," most of us accept the fact that we are led by the Spirit. But how does He lead us?

We have wished for signs or concrete evidences of the Spirit's leading. Perhaps you, as I, have prayed in times of stress and decision that the right choice would be made clear by some indisputable evidence. God has given such evidence to some, but I have heard no voice from heaven, felt no touch of an unseen hand, seen no sign in the sky, or even felt an assuring bodily sensation at the right moment.

How, then, may I know the Spirit's leading? I shall not pretend to give all the answers, but here is a conviction that has come to be an assurance to me in recent times as I now see some things that I overlooked previously. Instead of plucking proof-texts to prove my case, let me review some examples of how the Spirit led certain other persons.

1. After his baptism and reception of the Spirit, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. How was he led? By the hand? By a rope? We would conclude that Jesus' mind and will were the instruments by which he was led. As Jesus was about to enter his ministry, he could see that it would lead ultimately to the hell of separation from God in behalf of mankind. He was tempted to avoid this by serving man in other ways. The Spirit led him in and through this by means of his thinking and volition. Jesus chose the most loving, unselfish course, interpreting the will of God from Scriptures, and made his decision in agonizing fasting. When the decision was made, the devil left him, and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.

Let us not reject this example on the ground that Jesus was divine while we are not. Divinity cannot be tempted and has no need of the leading of the Spirit. He was led and tempted in his humanness.

2, After Jesus' ascension and while the disciples waited in Jerusalem, Peter addressed the disciples on the need of choosing a witness to replace Judas. He initiated a search which produced two men of their own selection. He acted on his own understanding of the will of God relating to this matter as he interpreted it from the Scriptures. They prayed about it and asked God to make the final decision through lottery. Why put forward two men, one of whom would be rejected and embarrassed? By nominating two and casting lots, they would be depending upon the Spirit directly to make the final choice. Would the

Spirit lead through lottery, the flipping of a coin? That is not our usual concept! We generally think of specific inspiration or direct revelation. But neither Peter nor the eleven got up and announced that God had revealed his choice of Matthias to them. Such a revelation would have saved Justus from his embarrassment because then his name would not have been put up. They interpreted the coin flip as God's answer, and there was never any repudiation of Matthias' apostleship. It was a Spirit-led choice.

The Spirit led through men who unselfishly and prayerfully sought to do what they understood the will of God to be from their reading of the Scriptures.

3. When Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch after preaching to the Gentiles, men came from Judea insisting that all be circumcised to be saved. "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them." This was a very big issue that could not be ignored. But why should they debate the matter? Why did not Paul get up and say, "Hey, listen; there is no place for debate; I am an apostle fully empowered by Jesus; I will give you the answer by revelation?" That is our common concept as to how spiritual guidance would come.

Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about the question; then they were sent on their way by the church. They were appointed and sent by the church, but later, in Galatians 2:2, Paul wrote, "I went up by revelation." Thus the Spirit led through the decisions of men.

At Jerusalem, there was much debate among the apostles and elders --- Spirit-guided men debating to ascertain the truth! Peter made a speech setting forth his views, which was followed by expressions from Paul and Barnabas. Then James replied, "Brethren, listen to me." He gave his reasoning based on his interpretation of the scriptures, and concluded with, "My judgment is . . .," and detailed his solution to the problem. His suggestions "seemed good to the apostles and elders, with the whole church," and they agreed to send a letter to Antioch stating their conclusions.

Here we see sincere disciples debating, investigating the will of God, and reaching conclusions based on their judgment. Yet, in their letter, they could claim that "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" to reach those conclusions. They recognized the leading of the Spirit!

4. In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul warned, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." How and when did the Spirit appoint elders? In the only record of appointment, two evangelists, Paul and Barnabas, appointed them. And the evangelist, Titus, was instructed to appoint elders in Crete. No doubt, they consulted with the people of the congregations in making their

selections. They prayed and fasted in their sincere effort to do the will of God. In this manner, they were being led by the Spirit so that Paul could affirm that the Spirit did the ordaining!

5. Now let's look at Paul's writing about marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. This has been puzzling to most of us because it does not fit our ideas of inspiration and revelation.

In verse 8, Paul bases his instruction simply on "I say." In verse 10, he says, "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord. . ." Jesus had spoken on that subject. But in verse 12, he says, "To the rest I say, not the Lord. . ." In similar manner, in verse 25, he says, "Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion. I think. . ." Verse 40 states, "In my judgment. . ."

In these references we have "I say," "I say, not the Lord," "I think," "I give my opinion," and "in my judgment." Are these instructions by Paul merely human guidance? No. In the concluding sentence, Paul assures us, "And I think that I have the Spirit of God." This unselfish, loving, spiritual man gave advice based on his deep understanding of the will of God, and he trusted that the Spirit of God was leading him in it.

6. Paul explains that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Have you seen the Spirit in one of our baptistries immersing anyone? All of our baptisms have been performed by men who were acting on their understanding of the will of God, and Paul interprets that as the leading of the Spirit so much as to say the Spirit actually does the baptizing. Thus, "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

Now, can we not apply the things we have observed from these examples of the Spirit's leading to our own life situations? Our lives are made up of constant decisions. Some are casual while some involve weighty, complex problems. Shall I buy a new car, quit this job, help this man, use my time for this or for that, use my money in this way or in that way, marry, divorce, read, scream, sleep, pray, visit, or whatever? Does the Spirit lead me in these decisions? What confidence may I have that he does?

I may have the same confidence in the Spirit's leading as the persons in our examples did, if I seek earnestly in the Scriptures to know what God wants, make the most loving and unselfish choices, and pray for God's help in choosing the right course. Prayer helps me to see things from God's viewpoint and it helps me to see through my own selfish interests and my rationalizations to please myself. Thus, when I make or implement a decision, I may rightly declare, "The Spirit led me in this!"

Such a view makes no claim of perfection. The Spirit-filled apostles were not inerrant in their lives and judgments. But God will save his Spirit-led children in spite of their lack of perfection.

The views expressed here do not deny that God has ever spoken to anyone audibly, given physical assurances, or revealed truth through specific inspiration or direct revelation. But the present-day disciple who looks for those demonstrations may never be confident that the Spirit is leading him in any personal way.

(The basic thought of this lesson was gained from a taped lesson by Wes Reagan.)

--- *1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas 78130*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

By the time you receive this issue I will be in Japan, the Lord willing, visiting churches and missionaries in Tokyo and Osaka. After eight days I will fly on to Thailand where for three weeks I will teach at a Bible institute in Chiangmai, near the Laos border, where I will have both Thai and Laotian students. I plan to spend considerable time with the nationals of those countries, including those who live in the back country. I will make notes on my experiences and pass them along to you through these columns. I greatly appreciate all those who pray for me --- and for Ouida who has to stay home.

Dwight Thomas, Ridgeway Dr., Elizabethtown, Ky. 42701, is very concerned that the prayer amendment become a part of the Constitution of the United States. He reminds us of how it reads: “Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer. Neither the United States nor any state shall compose the words of any prayer to be said in the public schools.” It is called S. J. R. 72 or “the President’s Prayer Amendment,” and he urges that we write our representatives in Washington in behalf of this bill. Dwight is opposed to the alternate amendment, called “the silent prayer amendment,” for the Constitution already grants anyone the right to be silent.

If you think our world is not changing, you need to reconsider. The Presbyterians at Austin Theological Seminary in Austin, Tx. raised their eyebrows when two women from Churches of Christ enrolled this year to study for the ministry. One of them, a Church of Christ minister’s daughter, has an eye on the hospital chaplaincy, while the other one, believe it or not, is intending to be a pulpit minister. Several of our men are graduates of Austin.

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BOOK NOTES

Our more recent subscribers might be interested in our bound volumes. These are handsomely bound in matching sets, gold lettered, dust jacket, table of contents. They are hardbound books of library quality, and yet they are only slightly higher than the subscription price itself. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978) are 5.50 each; *Blessed Are the Peacemakers, With All the Mind* (two years in one volume, 1979-80) and *Jesus Today* (two years in one volume, (1981-82) are 8.50 each. If you send a check with your order, we pay the postage.

Many of our readers, not just preachers, would profit from A. M. Hunter's *Preaching the New Testament.* These are actually short expositions, only four or five pages each, on such fascinating topics as *Why Be a Christian?, What Is Christianity?, The Unfading Victory, God's Way of Righting Wrong.* Anything Hunter writes is worth reading. He's terrific! 5.50 postpaid.

Many of us may be among the 20 million Americans who suffer from anxiety attacks. Toby Rice Drews' *Get Rid of Anxiety and Stress* is a practical, do-it-yourself manual for managing anxiety. What it says about trusting and forgiving oneself is to the point. 5.50 postpaid.

We have a new supply of *The Mormon Papers,* which is all one needs in dealing with Mormonism in that it goes to the sources themselves. 4.50 postpaid.

Merrill C. Tenney's *Interpreting Revelation* may well be the best book in print on the last book of the Bible. While it is not a commentary, it is an explanation, mostly by subjects, on the entire book, and it tells one how to approach the book. 9.95 postpaid.

F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* is a veritable gold mine of information on Paul, his writings, his world. It is high at 16.95 postpaid, and we seldom recommend expensive books, but this one is worth it, all 510 pages.

Our newer readers might like to know what we've been saying through the years. For 3.00 we will send you 18 back copies, selected at random through the years, and postpaid, but mailed only once a month, along with the current issue.

Ouida wants you to remember to send *both* your old and new addresses when you move. We have to drop from our mailing list all those who move without informing us of a change of address.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

I'm often reminded of Lk. 13:34 where Jesus laments over Jerusalem. We cry out "Oh, Church of Christ, Church of Christ, the one who is wearing His wonderful name but is so bound with legalism by believing we are the only ones with the truth, how we have longed to share a deeper knowledge of Him, but you would not." But we are holding on to 1 Jn. 5:14: "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." --- *L. W. Case, Brookhaven, MS.*

Your and Carl's thoughts so honestly shared are a balm to my itching heart. Your "An Encouraging First for Churches of Christ" addresses an issue, the issue of protecting our beliefs and practices by refusing to listen to, much less consider the possible validity of another Christian position, that in my opinion must be resolved before the original unity can regain any real and lasting momentum. --- *Harold Bast, Ft. Worth, TX*

At first I threw it out because I didn't realize what it was. But after several copies I glanced through one and caught "Church of Christ," and since then I have read every copy. I was brought up a Catholic but my husband converted me. We've attended several churches, but I am at last getting my eyes open as to what the *real* church is, and to see what is really important over against what is not so important. Nothing can change what I see now, as you put it: "We are to receive one another even as Christ has received us, warts and all." --- *Cindy Foshee, Guy, AR.*

We are attempting to find others in the Oklahoma City metro area who are longing for a spiritual and effective fellowship. We are a small group of people of Church of Christ-Christian Church background, and we seek to provide something not available within the "system." We need and want to give love. --- *Pam and Dennis Johnson, 3700 Shadywood, Midwest City, OK. 73110 (405-737-2599).*

Things are really going well here at Mid-South Christian College. We have 57 students this year, which is a record enrollment. And the spirit and the enthusiasm is at an all time high. --- *Bill Griffin, Senatobia, MS*

Our non-instrument churches, except for a handful of earlier ones, started after WW2, mostly by efforts of men from Harding College, who were very young. Japan was under American occupation, and due to the war we were all very poor. Since the "living god" Emperor was no longer our uniting spiritual symbol, we were caught in a vacuum. Because of the free handouts people poured into the churches. Legalism, Americanism,

materialism, and Church of Christism were taught by the missionaries throughout Japan. But when Japan made her economic recovery such missionaries lost their magic touch. The weak, mushroomed churches lost their "masters," but legalism lives on. Today the last line of Judges applies to us: "There was no king in Israel at that time. Everyone did whatever he pleased." --- *Moto Nomura, Chitose, Box 22, Tokyo 156, Japan.*

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